

OF
Laying on of Hands.

Heb. 6. 2.

OR, A

DISCOURSE

Containing these 4. Chapters.

1. Of the several Ends of *Laying on of Hands*, in the New Testament.
2. What *Laying on of Hands*, is not, and cannot be meant.
Heb. 6. 2.
3. What *Laying on of Hands*, is and must be meant there.
4. That the *Laying on of Hands*, practised by some in these days, on all Baptized Believers, was never Instituted, Commanded, nor practised at all, by Jesus Christ, or his Apostles in all the New Testament.

Mark. 7. 7, 8, 9.

In vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of men.

For laying aside the Commandment of God, ye hold the Tradition of men.

Ye reject the Commandment of God, that ye may keep your own Traditions.

Col. 2. 8.

Beware lest any man spoil you, through vain deceit, after the Tradition of men, and not after Christ.

LONDON, Printed by John Streater, 1656.

Laying on of Hands.

DISCOURSE

Continued by the same Author.

OF THE NATURE AND USES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

IN TWO PARTS. THE FIRST, OF THE NATURE AND USES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

THE SECOND, OF THE NATURE AND USES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AS GIVEN TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

43.

46.

4

350



LONDON: Printed by J. B. Smith, 1784.

CHAP. I.

Of the several Ends of Laying on of Hands, in the New Testament.

FOr the better understanding of this great Controversy, of late raised, about *Laying on of Hands*;
We shall first consider the several Ends, of *Laying on of Hands*, practised in the New Testament.

Upon search we finde, this Rite or Ceremony was used, upon a threefold Account, or to a threefold End.

1. For Healing or recovering the sick.
2. For ministring or giving the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit.
3. For Ordaining and appointing of Officers.

1. For Healing or recovering the sick. *Mark* 16. 18. They shall Lay Hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Acts 28. 8. The father of *Publius* lay sick, &c. and *Paul* laid his Hands on him, and healed him.

2. For ministring, or giving the Holy Spirit. To this end *Peter* and *John* Laid their Hands on them at *Samaria*. *Acts* 8. 17, 18, 19. Then laid they their Hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. And when *Simon* saw, that through Laying on of the Apostles Hands, the Holy Spirit was given, &c.

And that hereby is meant the extraordinary Gifts of the holy Spirit, nothing is more evident. For,

Verse 12. it is said, they Believed.

Verse 14. that they had received the Word of God.

Verse 16. that they were Baptized.

All which could not be, unless they had already received the ordinary measures of the Spirit.

Further it is yet more evident from the Text it self; for after all this, it is said, They received the Holy Spirit by Laying on of Hands, *ver* 17.

And that before this, the Holy Spirit was fallen upon none of them. *ver* 15, 16: A phrase, peculiar to the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Spirit, See *Acts* 10. 44. and 11. 17.

It is yet further evident, for the Falling of the Holy Spirit on them, was so visible, that *Simon* saw it; *ver. 18.* And thereupon *ver. 19.* he saith, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay Hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit.

And that they Laid their Hands to this end, the Text is as expresse, *ver. 17.* They laid their Hands, and they received the Holy Spirit. And (*ver. 18.*) through Laying on of Hands, the Holy Spirit was given.

So that you see clearly, they laid on their Hands, to give the extraordinary or miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

But, say some, the words of *Simon ver. 18. 19.* are reproved by *Peter, ver. 20. 21.*

To which we answer: *Simon* is not reproved for what he had asserted, that he had seen; for, that was true. But, that he would have purchased this gift and power, with money; Herein lay his wickedness. Because thou hast thought, that the gift of God may be purchased with money, *ver. 20.*

Upon this account also *Paul* laid his Hands on the twelve men at *Ephesus, Act. 19. 6.* And when *Paul* had laid his Hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spake with Tongues, and prophesied.

And, that by the Holy Spirit here, is meant the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit, is clear: because *ver. 2.* it is said, they believed. Now none can believe without the Holy Spirit, *1 Cor. 12. 3.* But most clear in the Text it self; for the Holy Spirit, came soon them, that they immediatly thereupon, spake with Tongues and prophesied. A phrase noting the highest measures of the Spirit, that ever were attained; yea the Baptism of the Spirit, *Act. 2. 4.* and *10. 44, 45, 46.*

3. For Ordaining or appointing of Officers.

To this end, *Timothy* had hands laid on him, by the Presbytery or Eldership. *1 Tim. 4. 14.* and that this was for the Ministry, the whole context proveth, from *Ver. 11.* to the end. So also, *2 Epist. 1. 6.* is to be understood, *Paul* being one of the Presbytery: and there also, about the Text, Ministeriall gifts are spoken of.

If any object from these two places, that there is a gift spoken of, that *Timothy* received by laying on of Hands.

To this we Answer: that we verily perswade our selves, that none, who rightly come into this office in sincerity and conscience to God, and in love and duty to his Church, but may confidently

firmly expect the blessing of God to the increase of their gifts, and experience doth abundantly testify to the truth of this.

We further find upon enquiry, that all the standing Officers in the New Testament, were set apart unto their Ministry, by this Rite or Ceremony.

1. Messengers. Thus *Paul* and *Barnabas* were sent out by the Church, *Act. 13. 2, 3.* As they ministered to the Lord, the holy Spirit said, Separate me *Barnabas* and *Saul*, for the worke whereunto I have called them, and when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Thus you see the Messengers of the Churches were appointed to their work, by Laying on of Hands.

2. Elders, or over-seers. *1 Tim. 5. 22.* Lay Hands suddenly on no man.

And that this was spoken in reference to Elders, the whole context before prooveth, from *Ver. 1-7.* where the Apostle treats expressly of Elders, *Ver. 17.* Let the Elders, &c: *Ver. 19.* Against an Elder, &c: and then in *Ver. 22.* Lay hands suddenly on no man, viz. Elders, before spoken of. That is, ordaine no man an Elder suddenly, or rashly, or too hastily, without some due tryall, and consideration had of his gifts, fitnessse, and qualifications, set downe *1 Tim. 3.* beginning, and *Tit. 1. 5, 6.* &c.

3. Deacons. Thus the 7 Deacons were appointed to their worke, *Act. 6. 3, 5, 6.* in expresse termes.

Thus you see all the New Testament-Officers were appointed by Laying on of Hands.

And this shall suffice for the first Chapter, to shew the severall Ends of laying on of Hands in the New Testament.

CHAP. II.

Which of these Layings on of Hands is not, and cannot be meant
Heb. 6. 2.

Before we resolve this Question, we readily acknowledge, that A Laying on of Hands. is a Principle of Religion, and a part of the Foundation of the Christian building, *Heb. 5. 12. & 6. 1, 2.*

Why else seemed it good to the holy Spirit, by this Pen-man,

to put and reckon it, amongst such Principles of the Christian Religion, as Repentance, Faith, Baptisme, the Resurrection, and eternall Judgment, and these granted by all, under the least profession of Christianity, to be Foundation-Doctrines.

This being premised, we notwithstanding deny, that it is either laying on of Hands, for Healing the sick; or for giving the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit; (much lesse the laying on of Hands practised by some in these days, as you may further see in *Chap. 4.*)

1. Here cannot be meant, laying on of Hands for healing or recovering the sick; and that for these reasons;

1. Because the gift or power of healing by laying on of Hands is ceased. Now that cannot be a Principle, &c: which is not in force in all ages, nor any man capable to practise it.

At the first promise of giving this power, it was accompanied only with miraculous gifts, *Mar. 16. 17, 18.* In my name shall they cast out Devils, they shall speake with new Tongues, they shall take up Serpents, and if they drinke any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay Hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

Now how dangerous and destructive a principle is this, that miracles should be of the essence of Religion (as Principles are) and yet no power to practise them!

2. As it is necessary, a foundation-Principle should continue and be in force in all ages; so it is necessary also, it should concerne the whole Church, and every member thereof, as a Foundation doth the whole, and every part of the Building, to support and uphold it.

Admir then this power were now in force; how would the healing of any one particular member, concerne the whole body as a principle? &c.

Therefore we conclude, that Laying on of Hands, for recovering the sick, cannot be that Principle, &c: *Heb. 6.*

3. The Laying on of Hands, for giving the extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit, cannot be meant here; and that for these reasons:

1. Because (as before) this power of giving the extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit, is now ceased.

As appears by the practice of it at this day, for although so many have had hands laid upon them, to this end; yet these extraordinary gifts, have never followed, to any one of them; but
both

both they and the administrators are, and remaine, as other men.

Yet to call this a Principle &c: what were this but to grant, that one of the Foundation-Stones of the Christian-Building were now lost? And if but a part of the Foundation faile, how tottering must the whole building stand, and will soone decay, and come to nothing. And it is well known, that a principle in all Arts and Sciences, is of constant and standing Use.

2. That this laying on of Hands, cannot be the principle, *Heb. 6.* because this Laying on of Hands, is there called a Doctrine, *Ver. 1, 2.*

But, that laying on of Hands, to give the holy Spirit, was never once taught in all the New Testament, no nor by them that practised it.

3. If this laying on of Hands were the principle, &c;

Then this very Church of the *Hebrews* (the first constituted Church in the New Testament after Christs Ascension) this Church being the same with that, *Act. 1. & 2.* had wanted a principle in Religion, which were very absurd to imagine; for they themselves had not Laying on of Hands to this end. *Act. 8.* being the first place that ever it was practised: and sure in all matters about worship, the written word must be our Rule; and to the Scriptures silence, we must give consent, according to that Proverb: Where God hath not a mouth to speake, we must not have an Ear to hear.

Besides: that they had not Laying on of Hands, to this end, is evident, because they received the extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit without it, *Act. 2. Vers. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: &c.*

Therefore we conclude, that neither of these two Layings on of Hands can be meant, in *Heb. 6. 3.*

CHAP. III.

What Laying on of Hands, is, and must be meant, Heb. 6. 3.

FOR the better resolving this Question, we must take notice, that it is Laying on of Hands, here in the singular number, *Ver. 3.* &c: therefore can be but one Laying on of Hands, that is called here a Principle, &c: and not more, as some would have it; for then it should be Layings on of Hands, in the plural number.

Of Laying on of Hands.

As in the same place, when the Apostle would understand more Baptisms then one, he saith, The doctrine of Baptisms, in the plural number.

This being considered, we must remember, what went before, that it is neither Laying on of Hands for healing the sick, nor for giving the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Then it must be, Laying on of Hands for ordaining of Officers. Which will more clearly appeare by this Argument.

It must be Laying on of Hands, either for healing the sick, or for giving the extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit, or for Ordaining of Officers.

But neither for healing the sick, nor for giving the extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit.

Therefore for ordaining of Officers.

For the first Proposition, That it must be for one of these three Ends, because there is no other Laying on of Hands, upon any other account in all the New Testament.

For the second Proposition, that it is neither for healing the sick, nor for giving the holy Spirit, hath beene already proved, Chap. 2.

Therefore it follows, it must be Laying on of Hands, for appointing of Officers. And this shall suffice, for the first Argument.

2. That Laying on of Hands for Officers, is here meant, will further appeare, because this Laying on of Hands, is called a Doctrine, *ver. 1.* and therefore must be a Laying on of Hands, which is some-where else taught. But the other Layings on of Hands, were never once taught. But this Laying on of Hands, was taught, *viz.* by the Apostle Paul, *1 Tim. 5. 22.* Lay Hands suddenly on no man, that is, Admit none rashly, or too hastily into office: and that this concerns Officers, see before, Chap. 1. In this *verse*, there are two things taught, one expressed, the other necessarily implied: that which is expressed, is, that Timothy should not suddenly Lay Hands on any man; that which is implied, is, that it was to be done, if advisedly. If not to be done at all, it were frivolous to say, it should not be done suddenly. Thus you see the Apostle Paul taught this Laying on of Hands which in *Heb. 6.* he calls a Doctrine.

Now lest any should say, that this laying on of Hands, concerns all Baptized believers, we therefore shall enjoin them, that from their own principle and practice, this cannot be, because they Lay Hands on all their disciples, immediately upon their

their Baptisme, and therefore leave no room for this word [suddenly] in the Apostles exhortation: and it is sore against their wills, if they may not Lay their Hands suddenly upon Baptisme: and, in their own sence, there is none fit for Baptisme, that is not thereupon fitly qualified, for this their imposition: nor do they ever stay till they are further qualified for this ceremony; and therefore the Apostles would in vaine have exhorted them, to Lay Hands suddenly on no man. But that this was for Officers, the most amongst themselves, that I have wet withall, do confesse.

We might yet further adde, if need were, that this Laying on of Hands, for office, was enjoined and commanded by the holy Spirit, *Act. 13. 2, 3.* but now they cannot shew, where the other Layings on of Hands, was in the least enjoined & commanded by the Holy Spirit. Therefore we conclude againe, it must be Laying on of Hands for Officers, which the Apostle here calls a Doctrine.

3. Againe this Laying on of Hands, this Church of the *Hebrews*, had practised amongst them, *Act. 6. 6.* they Laid their Hands upon the Deacons, to assigne them to their office. But none of the other Layings on of Hands, was practised amongst them, as we find. Now it cannot rationally be supposed, that the Apostle, writing to the *Hebrews*, should call that a principle, &c. which they were not acquainted with, but rather that Laying on of Hands, which they were under the practice of: and therefore it must be this Laying on of Hands for Officers, *Heb. 6. 2.*

4. Besides, this Laying on of Hands only remains in force, the other two not capable to be practised, nor have been for many hundred years. It must therefore necessarily follow to be this Laying on of Hands, which is still in force: because called a part of the Foundation, *Heb. 6. 1.* Now a Foundation must always be the same, & of constant & standing use to the whole building.

5. This Laying on of Hands only, concerns the whole Church, which is necessary a Principle should do. We have already shewed you how the other do not concern the whole; but this does, in regard every member is bound to live under the Government of the Church, and to be obedient to their Officers, to whom the Rule and care of the whole Church is committed. And therefore this must be the Principle, &c. *Heb. 6. 2.*

Having thus sufficiently proved, what Laying on of Hands, is

here meant. *Heb. 6. 2.* We shall now further shew you, what is here meant by this phrase of Laying on of Hands, that is to say: The Government of the Church, which was put into the Hands of men appointed thereunto, by this Ceremony of Laying on of Hands. The very Order of the Principles, as they are laid down, *Heb. 6. 1, 2.* further confirm this.

Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ; (or the beginning words of Christ) let us go on unto perfection: not laying again the Foundation of Repentance from dead works, and of Faith towards God, of the Doctrine of Baptisms, and of Laying on of Hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal Judgement.

For as the next thing to be done, after Faith and Repentance, is to be Baptized: so the next thing after baptism, is to be added to the Church. *Act. 2. 38. 41, 42. 47.* the Officers whereof were always appointed by the Laying on of Hands. And this was the constant practice of the Primitive times.

And as in these six Principles, the two first, *viz.* Repentance and Faith: and the two last, *viz.* the Resurrection and eternal Judgement, are absolutely necessary unto salvation: So the two middlemost, *viz.* Baptism, and Laying on of Hands; are necessary to a right and orderly Church constitution, and progression. Baptism, to admit into the Church; and this Ceremony of Laying on of Hands, noting the Ministry and Government of the Church, when come in.

We take leave yet to add, that this is the Judgment of most moderne and later writers, on the Text, that we have met with. We shall instance only some few in English. *Wilson's Christian Dictionary.* Dr. *Gouge* in his late large comment on this Epistle. *Trap* upon the place, saith, That by this phrase of Laying on of Hands, is meant, the Ministry and Government of the Church. And *Curtwright* upon the Rhemist Testament on this Text, and else where in his Harmony, saith, That he which denies Church Government, denies a Principle of the Christian Religion.

Now that there might be Government and order in the Church, Officers were appointed thereunto by Laying on of Hands.

The very light of Nature, and common Experience teacheth, that Government is a principle in all Constitutions, whether of Nation, Family, or the like: without which, all would suddenly

Of Laying on of Hands.

ly be out of order, for Anarchy hath alwaies been the fore-runner of confusion, if not of utter dissolution. So of a house, without a Foundation there can be no building. Hence the Metaphor in the Text, Not laying again the Foundation. Implying, that as a Foundation is to the building, to support and uphold it, so necessary is Government in the Church.

Hence it is, that the Apostles alwaies appointed Elders, in every Church, in every City *Acts* 14. 23. *Tit.* 1. 5. and these Elders were ordained, by Laying on of Hands; as before.

CHAP. III.

That the Laying on of Hands, practised by some in these days, on all Baptized Believers, was never Instituted, Commanded, or Practised by Christ or his Apostles in all the New Testament.

Here indeed lies the stress of the Controversy, which chiefly occasioned me to write these few Lines, that we might undeceive, and reduce such as are already under the vanity of this practise, and to prevent others from owning of, and submitting to such a Scripture-les thing as this is, which some (who know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm) call an Ordinance of Christ, though without any the least word or warrant for it, in all the New Testament of our Lord.

Certainly this hath been a received Principle, we have of late years taken up, and must continue to go by, if Christs Disciples; That we must introduce nothing into the worship of Christ, but what we have an expresse Word for, from that great Prophet in his New Testament. See *Acts* 3. 22, 23. For this very cause we have all along separated from the Bishops, & the Church of *England*, and shall we now return again? God forbid.

Now that which hath not one word of Institution, or command for it in all the New Testament, is no Ordinance of Christ, but Will-worship, and Superstition. (Superstition signifying something more then appointed.) But this Laying on of Hands, on all Baptized Persons, hath not one word of Institution, or command for it in all the New Testament. Therefore, no Ordinance of Christ, but Will-worship and Superstition.

That there is no Institution or Command for it in all the New Testament, appears, because the greatest Contenders and sticklers for this practise, did never yet alledge any one place, that

does in the least, prove any such thing; if there had been any, certainly they would have produced them. They themselves instance but two places, where the words are found, besides *Heb. 6. viz. Acts 8. & Act. 19.* with which they have raised such a dust, that hath indeed blinded the eyes of some honest, well-minded people; and by good words, and fair speeches, have deceived the hearts of the simple. But to lay this dust which they have raised, and to discover the (but) pretences they have made. We shall first consider their fore-mentioned Allegations in the General, and then view them more particularly.

First, neither any one, nor all of these places, have the least word of Institution or Command in them: Nor one syllable of proof brought from them, that this should be done to all Baptized persons. Besides the Ends of Laying on of Hands in these days, is a different thing from the Ends in these Texts; all which will more appear in the particular view of them, which is the second thing propounded to speak to.

And first for *Heb. 6. 2.* Neither the Subjects nor the Ends, are particularly mentioned and expressed in this place, and therefore we must go to other Scriptures, to find out what Laying on of Hands is most agreeable to this Text, as we do in the case of Baptism in the same place: The Text neither telling us, who should have Hands laid on them, nor to what End; neither is the word *All* in it, as was before noted, & we have already proved, from other Texts, and clear Arguments, that this Laying on of Hands is to another End. See *Chap. 3.*

The two other places they bring (we put them both together, because they are of the same nature) are *Acts 8. 14. 17.* where *Peter* and *John* Laid their Hands on them at *Samaritan*; and *Acts 19. 6.* where *Paul* Laid his Hands on the twelve at *Ephesus*.

That the Laying on of Hands in these Texts, was for the giving of the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Spirit, we have already proved, *Chap. 1.* There is not one word of Command here requiring us to do as they have done. They Laying on their Hands, as moved thereunto by the Holy Spirit, having received power to minister the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit, as appears, because those Gifts did immediately follow their Laying on of Hands.

We have also before proved, that the power of giving these Gifts being ceased, the Rite and Ceremony as to this End ought to cease also; and cannot but presumptuously be practised at this day.

day, the gifts never following, much lesse reckoned for a principle in Religion. But these gifts did both times immediately follow in the *Acts*. The gifts now being neither found in the Minister, nor following the Administration.

Have we not as good ground, to adventure the Laying on of Hands, miraculously to heale the sick, having I am sure as good a warrant, and may hope to speed as successfully.

Besides these two places they have not another, to pretend to; where the words are found.

As for that place, *Act. 9. 17.* where *Paul* had Hands Laid on him; from their own confession this will not serve their turne, for it was before his Baptisme, *verse 18.* and it was for the receiving of his sight, as well as for his being filled with the holy Spirit, if not principally for the recovering of his sight, see *ver. 12.* Only we will note in generall that this Laying on of Hands to extraordinary or miraculous ends, had not at all respect to Baptisme, for it was as well before Baptisme, as after it; as in this case before us. Nor do we think it needfull to make answer to those Texts, brought in by some of them; for number but not for weight, as *Eph. 2. 10.* we are built upon the Foundation *Chr.* and *Eph. 3. 14.* we are made partakers of Christ; if we hold the beginning &c: And 2 *Epist. of John, 9. 10.* whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the Doctrine of Christ, &c: and such like Texts as these are, where they can find the word beginning, Doctrine or Foundation. We cannot but judge; the very recitall of these Texts, a sufficient confutation, to any man, that hath his reason in his head. And wish with all our hearts, they might not incurre that severe censure of the Apostle, of Handling the word of God deceitfully, 2 *Cor. 2. 17.* and 4. 2.

And thus we doubt not, but all unprejudiced and unbiassed people, considering what we have said, will see they have no footing in the Scripture (which must be our Rule and Directory for our whole worship) for this their Laying on of Hands, much lesse to make it a principle of Religion, and so (as they do) a Boundary of Communion.

The truth is, they themselves are so much at a losse in this matter, that they agree not about the end. They make more ends of their on Laying on of Hands, then of the several kinds of Layings on of Hands, in the New-Testament. Some for one end; and some for another, and so proceed to a third and a fourth end,

as if God indeed had sent among them the confusion of Tongues, instead of speaking with Tongues; and the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Some would have Hands Laid on; for the obtaining of the extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit, in imitation of *Act. 8.* and *Act. 19.* to this we have once and againe spoken.

Some would have Laying on of Hands, for Confirmation as they call it, and though they throwd themselves under the fore-mentioned Scriptures, yet to speak truth, their best argument is the Common Prayer book; and some of them have beene so ingenuous to confesse as much; and have very much boasted and gloried, in this one inartificiall unconcluding Argument: for the Scripture owns them not all in this case.

Doctor *Gouge*, on *Heb. 6.* saith, that though Laying on of Hands, were anciently practised by the Fathers to this end, yet it is not expressly set down in Scripture. But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we have beene better taught in these last daies, then to own any thing in the worship of Christ, from their Tradition or Authority, unlesse also grounded on the word of God. What is this practice then, but setting our posts by Gods posts, and bringing in a Tradition of men, instead of an Appointment of Christ?

A third sort there are, who practise this Laying on of Hands, as a meanes to receive more of the Holy Spirit, and that in the ordinary measures of it.

I confesse, here they say well, if they could make the least proofe of such an End from the Holy Scriptures. This faire Pretext to obtaine more of the Spirit, hath beguiled many a poore, weake, untable soul. We professe our selves so farre one with them in this thing, that we cannot Judge him a Christian, nor worthy to be accounted Christs Disciple, that would not use all meanes, appointed by God to obtaine more of the Holy Spirit: we are so sensible of the daily need of more of the supplies of the Spirit: and could they but shew one place, where ever Laying on of Hands, was practised upon all Baptized Believers, upon such an Accompt, we would in great measure suddenly become their Profelytes. But in this matter (by their leave) we are as confident as the silence of Scriptures can make us, that there is not any one Text, in all the New Testament, that doth in the least, iustifie and warrant such a practice.

This is to appoint a means, that was never of Gods Institution, and therefore in the Use of it, cannot expect his blessing, but rather Who hath required this at your Hands.

Let experience testifie how much more of the Holy Spirit, they have received, then others of their Brethren, who were never under this practice. It hath not been our observation alone (and with greife of heart we speake it, & could wish it were otherwise) that instead of the Holy Spirit, a strange Spirit, another Spirit, hath generally followed this practice, so just it is with God, to give over persons, to their own Spirit, when they introduce a tradition of their own, for a commandement of God, and pretend the Spirit for it.

And who is so ignorant, that knows not what a strange rigid censoriousnesse, hath possesst the hearts and tongues of most of this way, as if indeed they had received, by Laying on of Hands, another Spirit, instead of the Holy Spirit of God. Witnesse the saying of some of them that we are not yet babs in Christ: & have forbid some their houses, who were instrumental in their conversion because they are not under this ceremony, denying communion with their Brethren, who in their own consciences are every way equal to them, in Gifts and Holinesse, and hold the same Faith and Doctrine of the Gospell, and are of the same order and practice with them, excepting this matter: yea and have proceeded so farre, as to excommunicate some, for no other cause but this. And as I was writing this, one told me, before good witnesse, he was dealing with, and in danger of Excommunication for this very thing.

Read these very men, in *Isa. 66. 5*. Your Brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my names sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appeare to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

There is yet a fourth End proposed by some, viz. That they are now waiting for the same Gifts of the Holy Spirit, that were then given; and therefore continue the Ceremony, as a means to obtain them. This is but little different from the first End. But to this we answer,

1. That there was never any Laying on of Hands, practised in all the New Testament, under the waiting, or in the expectation of the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Spirit, as a means to obtain them; but, as was said before, was never practised by any, till they had first received power from on high, and these Gifts immediately followed thereupon.

2. When the Gift or power is restored, then let the practice of the Ceremony be restored also; For as when the power ceased, the Rite by right ceased also; so the Ceremony ought not to be practised, till the power be again received.

Yet: for what is this else, but to set a seal to a blank. And whether this Power shall be restored again or no, is not our Enquiry at this time. But when the Gift, then the Rice; otherwise we should restore an empty Form, without Power. Again, as they cannot agree among themselves about the End; so neither about other Circumstances herein. Some of them would have the Administrator to be only Messengers. Others would have Elders also.

Though the Truth is, that Laying on of Hands, which they would have the Standard of this their practise, was only administered by Messengers. *Peter and John Acts 8. & Paul Acts 19.* the only persons Ministering in this kind, in all the New Testament. However they can agree well enough in this (as *Pilate and Herod* to crucifie Christ) so they to deal hardly with, if not to excommunicate their Brethren. We willingly pass by other incongruities, which they commit, not worth taking notice of. As the necessity they put of two being the Administrators of this work, when as *Paul alone, Acts 19.* did it. And yet but once more practised in all the New Testament. *viz. Acts 8.*

We hope, by this time, we have said enough to all impartial men, who are not carried otherwise, more by Will and prejudice, then by Scripture and Reason. For those that are already under this practise, we hope they will consider, what hath been here delivered; in all humility of mind, as those that have spoken the words of truth and soberness, our Consciences bearing us up with us in the Holy Spirit, aiming at nothing more, than the truth of the Gospel, and the peace of the Churches. We pray that your own names and credit, may not lye at stake in this matter, a temptation too incident to flesh and blood, and we trust the same God, that hath carried out many of you, very far in the waies of self-denial, will teach and help you at this time also, to judge it no dishonour to recede from error how long soever embraced, and to take up truth when e're you find it. Our bowels yearn towards you, and we are sad at heart, when we think of the sad account, some of you have to give in this particular, either for dividing from Churches, where you have had sweet communion together with your Brethren, or for dividing of Churches, or at least keeping them from uniting together; and all this, upon no better an account, then (I may say) a meer empty Form and Ceremony. We will only say this. This will be your loss in the day of our Lord Jesus, which is shortly coming.

Our heart is enlarged towards you, but we shall leave you to judge of this, as God shall direct you, in your most retired and serious thoughts.

Only we have this to adde; that we had not set Pen to Paper, had there not been such a violent imposition upon the Churches, of your imposition of Hands, as to make it essentiall to Communion.

The blessing of the Almighty, goe along with it, that as we have sown, He will by his good Spirit be pleased to water, and we shall expect a plentiful Harvest, for we can assure our hearts, that we are not as many, which corrupt, or deal deceitfully with the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ.

We hope you will find the two writings, which we have added to the word of God, to be of use to you. See *Gal. 4. 2. & 12. 31. Rev. 22. 18. Prov. 18. 16.* and our words, lest be reprove them, and thereby sound a

